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What Percentage Of People Entering Canada Illegally Are Allowed To Make Asylum Claims?

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These numbers reflect asylum claim numbers for 2022 and are still subject to change.
Backgrounder: Claiming asylum in Canada – what happens?
Refugee protection claims statistics (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada)

A question that often gets asked: What percentage of people who come into this country illegally are allowed to still make asylum claims? Just because they self-identify as refugees, it doesn't mean that their cases will be forwarded to the I.R.B.

The quick and dirty answer: roughly 81%, or four fifths of them.

Of those making claims: some 59%, of three fifths of those, are accepted by the I.R.B.

Note: The I.R.B. page "says" 59,736 claims were started between February 2017 and September 2022. But adding them manually, it comes to 73,407. Now, these are just claims that are initiated, not necessarily the number of people granted asylum.

As should be obvious: these numbers *only* relate to people entering Canada illegally. This does not take into account various refugee programs that are administered. And it's well known that this happens primarily through Roxham Road in Quebec.

This answer was calculated by contrasting data on illegals detained from Immigration and Citizenship Canada, with claims filed with the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada.

Total illegals detained in 2017: 20,278 (starting partially through February)
Total illegals detained in 2018: 19,419
Total illegals detained in 2019: 16,503
Total illegals detained in 2020: 3,302
Total illegals detained in 2021: 4,246
Total illegals detained in 2022: 27,052 (data up until Q3, or September 2022)

Total illegals detained: 90,800 (February 2017 to September 2022)

FOR REFERENCE
Q1: January to March
Q2: April to June
Q3: July to September
Q4: October to December

This is from the various pages available here. The numbers are not exact, but a start. The Immigration and Refugee Board says that 73,407 claims by illegals were made during that time.

If these are anywhere near accurate, then 73,407/90,800 is 0.8084, or ~81%. So, approximately four fifths of the people entering Canada illegally are able to make asylum claims.

A few disclaimers need to be mentioned though.

First, if the percentages seem out of whack, there may be gaps between when people are detained by the RCMP, and when the claims are actually launched. If they are stopped at the end of a quarter, but the claim isn't started for a few weeks, there will be discrepancies. It looks as though they were busy clearing a backlog.

If a person's identity cannot be confirmed, or if there are security questions, it can take a very long time before a claim is filed. As such, looking at the longer range is a lot more accurate.

Still, this is a place to begin.

Statistics on refugee claims made by Irregular Border Crossers, by Calendar Year and Quarter

		Finalized					
	Intake	Accepted	Rejected	Abandoned	Withdrawn & Other	Total Finalized	Pending
Total	59,736	25,789	18,019	1,059	4,138	49,005	10,731
February to March 2017 [1]	433	--	--	--	--	--	433
April to June 2017	2,159	131	24	--	--	173	2,419
July to September 2017	8,558	409	139	22	88	658	10,319

YEAR, QUARTER	INTERCEPTIONS	CLAIMS WITH IRB	PERCENTAGE
2017, Feb-March	1,575	433	27.5%
2017, Q2	2,485	2,159	87.8%
2017, Q3	10,727	8,558	79.8%
2017, Q4	5,491	6,912	?
2018, Q1	5,052	5,581	?
2018, Q2	5,692	6,183	?
2018, Q3	4,982	5,037	?
2018, Q4	3,693	3,798	?
2019, Q1	2,698	2,918	?
2019, Q2	4,009	3,957	98.7%
2019, Q3	5,373	5,148	95.8%

2019, Q4	4,423	4,139	93.6%
2020, Q1	3,035	3,500	?
2020, Q2	59	360	?
2020, Q3	108	128	?
2020, Q4	100	162	?
2021, Q1	115	216	?
2021, Q2	78	232	?
2021, Q3	284	314	?
2021, Q4	3,769	789	20.9%
2022, Q1	7,049	2,772	39.3%
2022, Q2	9,382	4,512	48.1%
2022, Q3	10,621	5,599	52.7%
Feb 2017-Sept 2022	90,800	73,407	80.8%

Note: Beginning in Q4 of 2017, and Q1 of 2018, it seems that there were more than 100% asylum applications compared to people arriving. The likely reason is that the claims weren't started right away, making the backlog worse.

Strange, even when there were few illegals coming in 2020 and 2021, it seems that the backlog wasn't finished off. Guess everyone stopped working.

Now, this doesn't answer the obvious question about how many people who are declared ineligible actually leave. Either the Government doesn't keep such data, or they don't make it easy to find.

The CBSA reported that in 2019 and 2020, some 11,444 "removals" had taken place, but no detailed breakdown is provided. This number apparently includes failed asylum seekers, and people ordered deported for other reasons. The CBSA has also complained that the majority of the removal orders are unenforceable.

More digging will need to be done in a follow-up.

Even when this subject is covered, little in the way of hard numbers are provided. This is one of the better ones. As one point, it was reported back in 2017 that there was a backlog of some 40,000 people. It's currently at around 17,000.

Also, the totals of 25,789 (accepted), and 18,019 (rejected) are not accurate

As for how many of them are granted asylum, doing a manual count:
February 2017 to September 2022: 29,344 claims were accepted.
February 2017 to September 2022: 20,179 claims were rejected.

Total claims ruled = 29,344 + 20,179 = 49,523.

True, this includes claims started before February 2017, but assuming the acceptance rate is pretty consistent…

If we ignore the withdrawn and abandoned claims (as is done here), then 29,344 out of 49,523 were accepted for asylum. That works out to about 59%.

If the source material is at all accurate, roughly 81% of people coming into Canada illegally are allowed to have claims heard by I.R.B., and 59% of them are accepted. If it's not accurate, that figure could be a lot higher.

(1) https://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/statistics/Pages/Irregular-border-crosser-statistics.aspx
(2) https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/asylum-claims/asylum-claims-2022.html
(3) https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/asylum-claims/asylum-claims-2021.html
(4) https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/asylum-claims/asylum-claims-2020.html
(5) https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/asylum-claims/asylum-claims-2019.html
(6) https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/asylum-claims/asylum-claims-2018.html
(7) https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/asylum-claims/asylum-claims-2017.html

(8) https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2017/10/19/new-data-show-69-of-illegal-border-crossers-are-being-granted-asylum.html

(8) https://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/security-securite/arr-det-eng.html

(9) https://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/transparency-transparence/pd-dp/bbp-rpp/pacp/2020-11-24/km-mc-eng.html

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